

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 122135
ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /015 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/PAN:DKGUTHRIE/CEH
APPROVED BY ARA/PAN:RRWYROUGH
-----095728 131206Z /72
R 122210Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 122135

STADIS/////////
ARA ONLY

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:US, PN, AMGT

SUBJECT:AUTHORITY OF AMBASSADOR

FOLLOWING FYI IS TEXT OF MAY 9 MEMO ON THIS SUBJECT FROM
DEPUTY DEFENSE SECRETARY DUNCAN TO ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS BRZEZINSKI:

1."DURING OUR LUNCHEON MEETING ON 24 MARCH 1978 THE SECRE-
TARY OF STATE AND I DISCUSSED THE AUTHORITY OF THE U.S.
AMBASSADOR TO PANAMA AS IT RELATES TO THE PANAMA CANAL COM-
MISSION (PCC). IN THE INITIAL DRAFT OF THE IMPLEMENTING
LEGISLATION, STATE PROPOSED THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAVE COM-
plete authority over the PCC. DEFENSE RECOMMENDED THAT
THE PCC ADMINISTRATOR BE PLACED IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS
THE MILITARY COMMANDER (EXEMPT FROM AUTHORITY OF THE AM-
BASSADOR) AND THAT THE AMBASSADOR, THE PCC ADMINISTRATOR
AND THE AREA MILITARY COMMANDER BE REQUIRED TO KEEP EACH
OTHER FULLY INFORMED AND TO COOPERATE AND COORDINATE ON
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 122135

MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST.
2. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RECOGNIZES THAT THE U.S. AM-
BASSADOR TO PANAMA WILL BE CONCERNED WITH CERTAIN ISSUES
AFFECTING THE CANAL. WE BELIEVE THE AMBASSADOR'S NEED
FOR EARLY INFORMATION AND ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY TO CONSIDER
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S.-PANAMANIAN RELATIONSHIP CAN BE

MET BY EFFECTIVE COORDINATION IN PANAMA, BY HAVING THE AMBASSADOR PRESENT AND PARTICIPATING AS AN ADVISOR AT PCC BOARD MEETINGS AND BY CONTINUED PARTICIPATION OF THE AMBASSADOR AND HIS STAFF IN THE PANAMA REVIEW COMMITTEE, AN IN-COUNTRY VEHICLE FOR INTERCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND VIEWS BETWEEN U.S. AGENCIES. THIS WILL PROVIDE THE AMBASSADOR WITH A VOICE AT PCC BOARD MEETINGS AND TIMELY INFORMATION SO THAT HE CAN WEIGH IN AT THE LOCAL OR WASHINGTON LEVEL THROUGH HIS CHAIN OF COMMAND. A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER COULD ALSO BE ASSIGNED TO THE PCC STAFF, ON A REIMBURSABLE BASIS, TO PROVIDE POLITICAL ADVICE.

3. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT IT IS NECESSARY, OR WISE, FOR THE AMBASSADOR TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER THE PCC. ALTHOUGH THE AMBASSADOR NORMALLY WOULD NOT WANT TO INTERFERE IN CANAL OPERATIONS, THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE MIGHT USE THIS AUTHORITY WOULD CREATE A DICHOTOMY BETWEEN POLICY AND OPERATIONS THAT WOULD HINDER THE PCC MANAGEMENT IN CARRYING OUT ITS ASSIGNED MISSION.

4. I BELIEVE STRONGLY THAT THE OPERATION AND DEFENSE OF THE CANAL MUST BE MANAGED CENTRALLY UNDER THE AEGIS OF ONE AGENCY. WE ASSUME THAT AS THE RESULT OF AN ONGOING OMB STUDY THE PRESIDENT WILL ASSIGN OVERSIGHT OF THE PANAMA CANAL COMMISSION TO THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY ACTING THROUGH THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. THE AMBASSADOR DOES NOT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 122135

BELONG IN WHAT WOULD THEN BE A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CHAIN OF COMMAND. GIVING THE AMBASSADOR FINAL AUTHORITY WITHIN COUNTRY WOULD, I BELIEVE, ALSO UNDERMINE OUR PRESENT POSITION WITH THE CONGRESS, BY IMPLYING THAT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH WAS WILLING TO SUBORDINATE U.S. INTERESTS IN THE OPERATION AND DEFENSE OF THE CANAL TO THE VAGARIES OF U.S.-PANAMANIAN POLITICAL RELATIONS.

5. FOR THESE REASONS, THE AGREEMENT REACHED AT OUR MEETING WITH SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE ON 24 MARCH PROVIDED FOR PLACING THE PCC ADMINISTRATOR IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS THE AREA MILITARY COMMANDER (I.E., REPORTING IN MY CHANNEL) IS THE BEST SOLUTION. PROPOSED LANGUAGE WAS AGREED UPON SUBSEQUENTLY BY THE STATE AND DEFENSE DEPARTMENT STAFFS AND INCLUDED IN THE LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE FORWARDED TO SENATOR BROOKE AND OTHER SENATORS ON 28 MARCH 1978.

6. RECENT REPORTS INDICATE THAT STAFF PERSONNEL OF THE NSC AND EMBASSY PANAMA ARE NOW ATTEMPTING TO REVERSE THE AMBASSADORIAL POWERS DECISION. I OBJECT STRONGLY TO THESE ATTEMPTS TO CIRCUMVENT THE AGREEMENT REACHED PREVIOUSLY, AND REQUEST THAT YOU INTERCEDE WITH THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT

AND BUDGET TO ENSURE THAT THE LEGISLATION FORWARDED TO THE

CONGRESS WILL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH MY AGREEMENT WITH
SECRETARY VANCE." VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 may 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE122135
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DKGUTHRIE/CEH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780203-0894
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780562/aaaacaxx.tel
Line Count: 120
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4328969f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY, STADIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2702598
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AUTHORITY OF AMBASSADOR FOLLOWING FYI IS TEXT OF MAY 9 MEMO ON THIS SUBJECT FROM DEPUTY DEFENSE SECRETARY DUNCAN TO ASSISTANT TO PR
TAGS: AMGT, US, PN
To: PANAMA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4328969f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014